

# TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR COMMUNITIES

## DESCRIPTION

EPA provides technical assistance for communities to help citizens understand and comment about site-related information. By law EPA must inform communities about Technical Assistance Grants (TAGs) and assist them in applying for these grants. EPA also informs citizens about obtaining assistance through other programs, such as the university-based Technical Outreach Services for Communities (TOSC) program and the Department-of-Defense-based Technical Assistance for Public Participation (TAPP) program. This tool provides information about each of these programs. The purpose of informing communities about the availability of independent technical assistance programs is to help communities understand and participate in decisions affecting hazardous waste cleanup.

## MAKING IT WORK

Because each community is unique, you must determine (through *Community Interviews*) the best method of informing the community of the availability of technical assistance and the difference between TAGs, TOSC, and TAPP.

## TIPS

- Consult with your community to determine what type of technical assistance would be most helpful and the best way to inform the community of its availability. In some communities basic outreach may suffice, while others may need workshops and technical training. Some communities may demand independent technical assistance programs.
- Advise communities about the TAG program and determine if the community is interested. If so, contact the Regional TAG Coordinator, as necessary.
- If the community is not interested, determine why. Some communities may need technical assistance, but do not want to bother with obtaining a TAG. In such cases, other options may be available, such as TOSC or local experts.
- Suggest a technical assistance program tailored to each community. Obviously, each community is different and requires different levels of education and assistance. Let the community decide what it wants and help them to obtain it.

## RELATED TOOLS/RESOURCES IN THE TOOLKIT

- [Community Groups, Tab 4](#)
- [Workshops, Tab 46](#)
- [Local Resources, Tab 22](#)



[See Community Interviews, Tab 5](#)



# TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR COMMUNITIES

# TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE GRANTS (TAGs)

## DESCRIPTION

Grants of up to \$50,000 are available to qualified groups of individuals that are affected by sites listed on the National Priorities List (NPL), or proposed for listing on the NPL where a response action has begun. Additional funding is available for sites meeting certain criteria. TAGs can be used for hiring a technical advisor/grant administrator, attending approved training, and obtaining relevant supplies and equipment. A technical advisor is an independent expert who can explain technical information and help the community articulate community concerns. This advisor can participate in approved training, site visits, meetings, and hearings, and interpret technical documents. Since the program began on March 24, 1988, 200 TAG awards have been issued by EPA, totaling more than \$12,800,000.

## REQUIRED ACTIVITY?

Yes. The NCP, at 40 CFR § 300.430(c)(2)(iv), requires “informing the community of the availability of technical assistance grants.”

## MAKING IT WORK

### WHEN TO USE

TAGs are available at any time during the site cleanup process, but are usually most effective during the Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study or “pre-ROD stage.” This is when most decisions about the response to site contamination are made and when a technical advisor is most useful. TAGs may address multiple Operable Unit (OU) or multiple RODs.

When to use this tool will depend, in part, upon whether the affected community meets the relevant criteria for a TAG award. The CIC is required to inform communities that technical assistance grants are available to any qualified group of individuals affected by a release or threatened release at a NPL site where a response action is underway. Individuals who are “affected” by a release are those who can demonstrate actual or potential health, economic, or environmental threats. The basic provisions of the TAG Program include a \$50,000 grant to hire technical advisors to help the community understand site-related technical information. Only one TAG is awarded per NPL site. Additional funding may be available for unusually large or complex sites. At the time of the award, a recipient group must either be incorporated as a nonprofit organization, or demonstrate that it has taken all necessary and appropriate actions to do so. Recipients must show proof of incorporation no later than the time of the first request for reimbursement for costs incurred.

The recipient group must contribute 20% of the total project cost of the TAG unless EPA waives part or all of the matching funds requirement. The requirement can be met with cash or in-kind contributions. Administrative costs, such as record keeping and accounting activities, may comprise part of the TAG budget (including the matching share). However, most, if not all, of the funds awarded to the recipient group must be used to procure a technical advisor(s).

A TAG is most effective when the TAG group (recipient) acts as a partner in the remedial process and works with EPA and the broader community. The TAG group is responsible for managing the grant, selecting the technical advisor, informing the community, and responding to EPA requests for comment on technical documents. TAG groups that include members with grant management experience or that hire a grant administrator are most likely to excel, although such expertise is not required to succeed. Success also depends on establishing good relationships with the Remedial Project Manager (RPM), CIC, Potentially Responsible Party (PRP), and other stakeholders.

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# TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE GRANTS (TAGs)

The TAG group should be representative of groups and individuals of the affected community. Additionally, the group should have a plan for disseminating information from the technical advisor to community members. TAGs awarded to groups with a specific agenda (unrelated to site cleanup), or groups that do not represent a consensus of community opinion are less likely to succeed. Sites in which the PRP or RPM have not been forthcoming in providing answers to citizens' questions or who are condescending to community members can lessen the likelihood of an effective TAG. TAGs are least effective when the TAG's information outreach plan (or scope of work element) is poor or the outreach effort is poorly executed.

## **INELIGIBLE GROUPS:**

Groups not eligible for TAG awards include potentially responsible parties (PRPs: people or companies potentially responsible for or contributing to contamination at the site), academic institutions, political subdivisions, or a group established or sustained by governmental entities or PRPs.

## **INELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES:**

TAG funds may not be used to develop new information, such as conducting independent testing and monitoring activities at a site. Also TAG funds are not available for use in underwriting legal actions, including the preparation of court testimony and hiring of expert witnesses. Any activities or expenditures for recipient group members' travel may not be reimbursed. TAG funds may not be used for political activity, lobbying, or for epidemiological or health studies, such as blood or urine testing.

## **HOW TO USE**

First, you must inform the community of the availability of the TAG. This is generally accomplished by discussing the TAG program at **Public Meetings** and distributing brochures or flyers about the program. **Public Meetings** should include the TAG program on the agenda. Also use a **Public Notice** in a local newspaper to advertise the availability of the TAG. When an interested group submits a Letter of Intent (LOI) or a completed TAG application to its EPA Regional Office, EPA must provide formal **Public Notice** (including mailings and meetings) to other interested parties that an application has been received and will soon be under review. This gives other potential applicants 30 days to contact the original applicant to form a coalition and submit a single application. Because only one TAG may be awarded for a site, EPA encourages groups to consolidate in order to provide technical assistance to the most widely representative group of community members. If groups are unsuccessful in forming a coalition, each has an additional 30 days to prepare its own application. In this case, competing TAG applications will be evaluated, and only one selected to receive funding.

Unless the CIC is the project officer, TAGs are overseen by a TAG Coordinator in each region. TAG Coordinators determine whether the group meets specific administrative and management requirements. TAG Coordinators assist groups in coalition building and application completion.

The completed TAG application must include a budget estimate, a work plan, and schedule of project milestones. TAG Coordinators can provide application forms and sample work plans and budgets. The TAG review and evaluation panel generally includes the TAG Coordinator, RPM, CIC, and other site team members. After grant is awarded, EPA has the option to review TA contracts to ensure compliance with applicable requirements, but has no role in the TAG recipient's selection of a TA provided the individual possesses the qualifications set forth in the TAG rule.

[See Public Meetings, Tab 32; Public Notices, Tab 33](#)



# TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE GRANTS (TAGs)

Applicant groups should consult the following documents for detailed instructions on how such information should be presented:

- *Applying for Your Grant*
- *The Application Forms with Instructions*
- *Procurement—Using TAG Funds*
- *Managing Your Grant*

TAG recipients must submit quarterly progress reports to EPA, an annual financial status report, and a final report that describes TAG project activities over the entire period of the grant. There are additional certification and record keeping requirements.

## Tips

- Promote TAGs. In a recent survey of TAG recipients, 91% said the TAG program allowed them to feel “much more informed and involved,” and 83% reported the community benefited a great deal from their TAG involvement.
- Work with your TAG Coordinator when identifying communities interested in TAGs.
- Be innovative about broadcasting TAG availability.

## RELATED TOOLS/RESOURCES IN THE TOOLKIT

- [Community Groups, Tab 4](#)

## OUTSIDE SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- 40 CFR Parts 30 and 35
- Superfund Program TAG Page: [www.epa.gov/superfund/tools/tag/index.htm](http://www.epa.gov/superfund/tools/tag/index.htm)



# TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE GRANTS (TAGs)

# TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR COMMUNITIES (TOSC)

## DESCRIPTION

Technical Outreach Services for Communities (TOSC) is a university-based outreach program that provides technical assistance to communities affected by hazardous substances that do not fit the profile of the Technical Assistance Grant (TAG) program. The mission of the TOSC program is to give communities an independent understanding of hazardous substance contamination issues so they may participate effectively in decision making.

TOSC services are provided through cooperative agreements with a national network of university staff and students coordinated by the five Hazardous Substance Research Centers (HSRCs). Each HSRC serves one, two, or three EPA Regional Office(s). Technical assistance under TOSC is similar to the extension service models employed by universities for many years. Technical assistance under TOSC usually takes the form of education and other types of outreach.

## REQUIRED ACTIVITY?

No.

## MAKING IT WORK

### WHEN TO USE

TOSC services are available to communities with concerns about local hazardous substance contamination. The five regional TOSC centers provide a broad range of technical assistance to a wide variety of communities. However, TOSC is not available to all communities, and delivery of services is discretionary on the part of the HSRC. While all communities in need of hazardous-substance-related technical assistance are encouraged to contact their regional TOSC center, the TOSC program is designed to respond to particular local needs.

The TOSC Threshold Selection Criteria are listed below:

- The problem must relate to hazardous or toxic contamination or pollution; and
- The site must be nominated for TOSC assistance by EPA, state or local government, citizen group or third party.
- More likely to be selected if:
  - Environmental justice concerns are present
  - Human health protection concerns are present
  - Identifiable citizen/community group(s) are established (*e.g.*, CAGs, neighborhood associations)
  - Multiple sources of requests for TOSC assistance occur
  - A meaningful role for educational efforts exists
  - The request occurs early in the decision making process
- Less likely to be selected if:
  - TAG, Technical Assistance for Public Participation (TAPP), or other technical assistance is available to the community

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# TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR COMMUNITIES (TOSC)

- Minimal community interest exists
- Community poorly organized;
- A single request for support is submitted;
- Extreme polarization exists in the community;
- TOSC cannot address community needs (*e.g.*, the needs are for legal assistance); or
- The request occurs too late in the process to offer meaningful assistance.

## How to Use

Each HSRC may be contacted directly to request TOSC services. While the simplest way to obtain TOSC services is for a community to contact a regional TOSC center directly, most communities are unaware of the program. CICs are often key players in the TOSC process by providing referrals. Based on the threshold selection criteria, the CIC should refer a qualified community to the appropriate TOSC center. Because TOSC resources are limited, TOSC centers place a premium on such referrals. Interaction with the EPA Regional Office is seen as an indication of a community's interest and commitment to participating in decision making.

Typical recipients of TOSC assistance work in partnership with their TOSC center to design an approach and strategy for the provision of technical services, including feedback and evaluation. As providers of scientific information, the universities that provide TOSC services will not assume the role of advocate or provide scientific conclusions based on opinion.

## Examples

### EXAMPLE 1: ROCKY MOUNTAIN ARSENAL

At the Rocky Mountain Arsenal site in Colorado, the Great Plains/Rocky Mountain HSRC set up a toll-free line to answer technical questions and prepared a resource guide for the community. The guide covered the history of the site, the regulatory and risk assessment processes, and cleanup alternatives. The HSRC also conducted two on-site technical workshops for local advisory boards on: 1) the fundamentals of science, engineering, and project management as they relate to the site; and 2) dioxin contamination.

### EXAMPLE 2: HOUSATONIC RIVER

At the Housatonic River site in Massachusetts, the Northeast HSRC organized a student team project that ranked the risks and impacts of alternative remediation approaches, reviewed and interpreted documents and records from the site for the local community, conducted meetings to provide overviews of alternative approaches, and developed a computer model to help the community understand site contamination and the impact of dredged material.

### EXAMPLE 3: PUEBLO TRIBES

The South/Southwest HSRC worked with the Pueblo Office of Environmental Protection to produce a pesticide manual, conduct a pesticide training workshop, provide local community relations staff training and assistance, and brief various Pueblo tribes on cleanup and education services and options.

## Tips

In 1997, an independent workgroup was formed to evaluate the TOSC pilot program and make recommendations to steer the program as it moved beyond the pilot stage. The workgroup



# TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR COMMUNITIES (TOSC)

consisted of representatives from EPA headquarters and regions, HSRCs, and community groups that had received TOSC assistance. Among the recommendations were the following tips for maintaining effective relations between CICs and the TOSC program:

- EPA Regional community involvement staff can promote the TOSC program by:
  - Providing contact between communities and TOSC Center coordinators
  - Identifying a TOSC point-of-contact for each EPA Regional community involvement program to provide information regarding communities needing technical assistance
  - Coordinating EPA activities at communities of common interest with the regional TOSC coordinators
  - Disseminating information obtained from the TOSC coordinators to all interested parties in the EPA Regional community involvement program
  - Providing the TOSC Center coordinators with copies of community outreach plans for communities of common interest and/or other site specific projects
  - Providing the TOSC Center coordinators with names and telephone numbers of all EPA personnel working at communities of common interest
  - Inviting TOSC personnel to in-house training activities
  - Providing assistance to the TOSC personnel upon request on specific problems; and
  - Informing the TOSC Center coordinators about other on-going activities and communities being served by the EPA Regional community involvement programs
- TOSC programs can assist EPA Regional community involvement staff by:
  - Providing the EPA Regional community involvement programs with a list of criteria for selecting communities, the type of communities of preference, and the limit to the number of communities to be served
  - Providing technical assistance to as many communities as possible that are proposed by EPA, states, local governments, or the communities themselves
  - Providing EPA with a copy of the initial community assessments, describing the community needs and history and the present and desired involvement of the community in the remediation effort
  - Providing EPA with a copy of the working agreement between TOSC and the community to be served, as appropriate
  - Disseminating information obtained from the EPA programs to all TOSC personnel
  - Informing EPA offices of all communities or geographic areas being served by the TOSC program
  - Providing names and telephone numbers of all TOSC personnel to the EPA Regional contact; and
  - Informing EPA offices of activities at communities of common interest
- TOSC and EPA representatives should develop and maintain continuous and on-going communication between the TOSC programs and the EPA Regional community involvement programs. TOSC coordinators should be regularly invited by Regional CICs to describe their on-going programs to community involvement staff.



## Description

To improve public understanding of military environmental activities, the Department of Defense (DoD) has promulgated a Final Rule on Technical Assistance for Public Participation (TAPP) in DoD Environmental Restoration Activities. The TAPP program allows local community members of Restoration Advisory Boards (RABs) and Technical Review Committees (TRCs) to obtain independent technical analyses on topics of local concern, such as the potential health implications of site conditions, site investigations, and remedial activities at an installation. DoD's final TAPP rule allows an installation to provide a maximum of \$100,000 per year to small businesses to provide public participation assistance to members of RABs and TRCs.

Like EPA's Technical Assistance Grants, TAPP does not include activities such as litigation or underwriting legal actions, political activity, or health studies. RAB administrative support and broader community involvement functions will continue as normal if TAPP is provided to RAB/TRC community members.

## Required Activity?

No.

## Making it Work

### When to Use

Once a base commander approves TAPP funding, community members of RABs and TRCs can suggest which technical consultants they would like DoD to procure. The ultimate procurement decision is DoD's, however. RABs and TRCs apply for technical assistance to help contribute to the public's understanding of overall environmental conditions and activities as well as enhance the public's ability to participate in the decision making process. To be eligible for TAPP funding, a community must have an established RAB or TRC comprised of no less than three community members whose majority requests TAPP assistance.

### How to Use

The RAB or TRC must prepare and submit a formal TAPP application to the installation specifying the type of assistance required. Technical support under TAPP will be considered only if the Federal, State, and local agencies cannot provide the RAB and TRC with the needed assistance, or if it can be shown that such assistance will contribute to the efficiency of the restoration.

Requests for TAPP funding will be subject to an annual limit. In the event that TAPP requests exceed the limit, the installation will consider factors such as closure status, the installation's restoration program status, and alternate sources of assistance in determining funding.

## Tips

- While TAPP has been approved, at this time there is no mechanism to get TAPP funds from the installation to the public. Further guidance will be forthcoming regarding the distribution of funds for TAPP.
- For further information concerning TAPP, contact U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Restoration Programs Division, Program Management Branch (410) 671-3240.

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## RELATED TOOLS/RESOURCES IN THE TOOLKIT

- [Community Groups, Tab 4](#)

## OUTSIDE SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The final rule: 63 *Federal Register* 5255 (February 2, 1998).
- TAPP applications are available to RAB and TRC community members through the installation where the hazardous waste site is located.
- Installations are to contact the USACE, Restoration Programs Division, Program Management Branch, at (410) 671-3240, concerning TAPP applications.